

## Reducing Cargo Theft

It is estimated that cargo theft results in losses of \$15 to \$30 billion annually in the United States. While those numbers may seem alarmingly high, they illustrate just how vulnerable cargo is during the shipping process.

Shipping losses can dramatically cut into your bottom line, making it essential that you do everything you can to ensure that your goods are transported safely to their destination.

### Preferred Goods

Thieves are not indiscriminant in their selection of targets. Certain types of goods are more susceptible to theft. Computer hardware and other consumer electronics, designer apparel, pharmaceuticals, and alcohol and tobacco products all have a history of being highly targeted. In general, thieves look for products with the following characteristics:

- Are difficult to identify as stolen
- Are small but have a high value
- Are easy to transport
- Are easy to resell

While you should always strive for strong security measures no matter the cargo, if you regularly deal in goods that have these characteristics, it is especially important that you institute anti-theft controls.

### Mitigating Theft Risks

There are several practices you can employ to help secure your shipping process, including the following:

- Start with the hiring process.

While the value of selecting good drivers cannot be understated, you need to diligently check all of your employees involved in the process. Whether it's a warehouse worker or an office clerk, if an employee knows about a truck's cargo, planned routes or any other logistical information they have the potential to be a liability. Use aggressive background checks during the hiring process to ensure that you are bring on trustworthy employees.

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## Adding the appropriate security measures to your shipping process is essential to deterring cargo theft and preventing costly loss.

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- Give employees the training they need.

Not every employee will come to the job knowing what they need to do in order to prevent cargo theft. It is important that you institute an employee training program that outlines their responsibilities. This is especially important for drivers; a driver who exhibits even basic tenets of security is less likely to be targeted by thieves.

- Maintain security during transit.

Obviously, loaded vehicles are much more venerable while stopped. This makes it important to plan appropriate routes that allow drivers to take rest stops at

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secure areas. However, while routes should be chosen for their safety, they also need to be alternated frequently as repeatedly using the same route can give thieves a better chance to plan.

Also, it is not uncommon for thieves to monitor shipping centers, waiting for an attractive target and then following the vehicle to its first stop. Encouraging drivers to put on at least 200 miles before making their first stop can reduce the chance they will be followed.

- Use technology to your advantage.

Vehicle and cargo tracking devices, security seals, tractor air locks, king pin locks and other devices can all be used to provide additional security. Depending on the cargo, a minimal investment in security devices could save you from a huge loss. Keep in mind, for these devices to be fully effective, employees need to be trained on how to use them. You also need to have a plan in place for alert features. If an onboard alarm signals you of a potential problem, you need to have a response planned out and ready to go.